Presentation Tips
185 Presentation

- Maximum length: 6 minutes.
- Pay attention to two minute and one minute warnings.
- Followed by a 2 minute question and answer session.
“A Technical Subject”

- A little vague, isn’t it?

- Basically, describe a process.

- If you’re not sure if your topic is technical enough, ask.
Past Topics

- Constructing Germanium Nanowires
- How to detect and prevent cheating in online games
- Path planning for multiple robots moving in formation
- Eyeglass lens manufacture
- How to build the frame of a house
- Establishing a wireless network in a rural setting using Satellite DSL
- The physics of automotive drift
- Rendering realistic 3D landscapes
- Artificial intelligence routines for Texas Hold 'Em
- Quality Assurance Testing.
- Collision detection in real-time multiplayer games
- Plotting graphs using Microsoft Excel
- How does BitTorrent work?
- Using Maya animation software
Restricted topic: Games

- Presentations on games are typically terrible.

- The few good game presentations tend to be very limited in scope.
  - Example: the 6-pool rush strategy in Starcraft II.

- Compromise: To give a game presentation, you will have to come talk to me in Office Hours at least a week before you present.
Basic Presentation Skills

- Voice
- Body Language
- Appearance
Voice

• Volume
  ◦ Speak loudly enough for the back end of the room.
  ◦ Don’t shout or whisper.

• Speed
  ◦ Speak naturally.
  ◦ Don’t rush, or speak too slowly.
Breathe.

- Practice deep breathing.
- Breathe slowly and deliberately.
- Practice delivering a single musical note for as long as possible.
- Extra credit: Study meditation techniques.
Pronounce words clearly

- Enunciate consonants
  - D-T
  - G-K
  - L-R
  - B-P
- He stood on the balcony, inexplicably mimicking him hiccupsing, while amicably welcoming him in.
Body Language

- Face the audience.
  - If you must turn away, do so briefly.
  - Don’t hide behind the podium.
  - Keep your body open to the audience.
Body language always says something.

- Whether you mean it to or not.
- You can look formal, or casual.
- Or stiff, or sloppy.
- Always look aware and awake.
Hand Gestures

- Keep hand gestures clear.
  - Point distinctly.
  - Use clean hand gestures.
  - Try not to wave your hands needlessly.
Appearance

- Dress for the occasion.
  - What are others wearing?
  - What do you feel comfortable in?
  - What you wear can affect your attitude.
  - When in doubt, err on the side of overdressing.
Preparation

- Outline the main objectives of the presentation.
- Always know your opening line.
- Follow your outline, don’t read from a script.
• Rehearse in front of a mirror.

• Rehearse in front of your peers.

• Rehearse in front of anyone who’ll watch.
  ◦ Use feedback constructively.
PowerPoint/Slide Presentations

- Useful, but frequently troublesome.

- Use slides to prompt points of discussion, not as your script.

- Don’t cram too much onto one page.
  - Two or three bullet points per page is usually enough.
Use clear graphics.

- Will they make sense to a non-expert?
- Are they large enough?
- Will they still be clear when projected on a screen?
- Do they contain more information than you can cover?
Presentation Structure

- Greet the audience.
- Introduce yourself.
  - Keep your introduction short.
  - Tell the audience what they need to know about you.
- Introduce your subject.
  - Tell the audience what you’re going to talk about.
  - Then talk about it.
Be prepared for questions.

- Answer what you can.
- Be honest about what you can’t answer.
- Ask friends and colleagues in the audience to help you out.
  - When in the audience yourself, help out your friends and colleagues.
Troublesome questions

- If an answer requires a lengthy response, offer to talk after the presentation.
- Be prepared for hostile questions.
  - Maintain your composure.
- Sometimes the Q&A session turns into an opportunity for commentary.
  - Be respectful of dissenting views.
  - You are the moderator. Control the room.
Frame your message.
  ◦ Especially if it is legally or socially controversial.
  ◦ Don’t directly advocate unethical actions.
  ◦ Be aware of your audience.
    • But don’t assume too much.
    • Expect unexpected reactions from your audience.
• Selling your idea or product?
  ◦ Address the merits and limitations of your subject.
  ◦ Don’t underestimate your audience.
Live Demonstrations

- Are you demonstrating how to use a program? A tool? A process?

- This is, for practical purposes, a **performance**.
  - Rehearse each step.
  - If possible, rehearse each step on the same equipment, in the same space as your presentation.
  - Leave as little as possible to chance.
  - Be prepared for malfunctions – have something to say throughout.
  - Keep it simple. It’s a demonstration, not a lesson.

- Class rule: Nothing dangerous or foul-smelling, please.
Humor

- Can be useful to deliver a point.
  - But can backfire if the joke isn’t funny.

- Choose appropriate material.

- Let the audience laugh - don’t cut them off.
  - What one group finds funny, the next may not.
Remember:

- Your audience is not a group of professional speakers.
  - They don’t expect you to be perfect.
  - They can sympathize with any nervousness.
  - You can correct any minor mistakes as you go along.

- Check out the space beforehand.
  - Examine the size, the seating.
  - Look at the technical equipment.
  - If possible, test it out beforehand.
Practice.
Practice.
Practice.

Beyond all else, convey your message.